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Thursday, 28 September 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Sauer (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 107 (*continued*)

Crime prevention and criminal justice

High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

The Acting President: Before we proceed, I would like to appeal to all speakers to limit their statements to three minutes when speaking in their national capacity and five minutes when speaking on behalf of a group of States, as stipulated in resolution 71/287. As members will recall, in resolution 71/323, of 8 September 2017, the General Assembly called for strict adherence by each speaker to the time limits of the Assembly, in particular during high-level meetings. This will enable maximum participation within the limited time available for this meeting. Participants with longer statements are encouraged to read a shorter version of their text and submit their full statements to the Secretariat for posting on the PaperSmart portal.

Also in accordance with resolution 71/323, the "all protocol observed" principle is recommended, whereby participants are encouraged, in the interest of time, to refrain from listing standard protocol expressions during their statements. In the light of that given time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed, so that interpretation may be provided properly. To assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the speaker's rostrum. May I appeal to all speakers for their cooperation in observing the time limit while delivering their statements, so that all those inscribed will be heard in a timely manner.

I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Jamaica.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): Jamaica welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting, which is consistent with the focus of this year's General Assembly theme on people and the quest for a decent life for all. Indeed, we recognize the mutually reinforcing relationship between the efforts that we are making to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Seven years ago, the international community launched the Global Plan of Action to tackle the scourge of human trafficking through the adoption of a coordinated and comprehensive approach. As we applaud the strides made on a global level since that time, the silent cries of victims ensnared in the grip of human trafficking must be given a resounding voice in every corner of the globe.

The Government of Jamaica accords the highest level of political commitment to the fight against human trafficking and unequivocally denounces the heinous crime of trafficking in persons. We reaffirm our determination to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, protect and assist victims, prosecute crimes of

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trafficking in persons, and strengthen local, regional and international partnerships through sound policies and a continued political will.

In keeping with the Global Plan of Action, Jamaica continues to develop and strengthen its domestic legislative and institutional framework. Our overarching domestic legislation, the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment) Act of 2007, as amended in 2013, will be bolstered by proposed further amendments that provide for trial by judge only when it comes to cases involving human trafficking. This proposal has been approved by the Cabinet and is currently being drafted.

The Government of Jamaica is a State party to the relevant international instruments related to the matter, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the International Labour Organization's Forced Labour Convention and its Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, and, more broadly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Jamaica has afforded the highest level of institutional support to tackling human trafficking. We are doing so through the establishment of an interministerial subcommittee of the Cabinet to monitor and make recommendations on our efforts to fight trafficking in persons, and, in 2015, we appointed a national rapporteur on trafficking in persons — the first to be appointed in the Caribbean.

Furthermore, our national task force against trafficking in persons has the responsibility of coordinating our national response. The composition of the task force demonstrates the level of importance that Jamaica attaches to the issue and reflects the holistic approach that we have adopted. The task force is multisectoral and multi-stakeholder in nature and spans a gamut of ministries, agencies, and non-governmental organizations that coordinate their efforts aimed at fighting human trafficking.

Notwithstanding our resource constraints, Jamaica has made significant strides in addressing the issue. Our national plan of action to combat trafficking in persons incorporates the guiding principles of the Global Plan of Action, and its implementation is undertaken by a dedicated secretariat established for this purpose.

National efforts must be adequately supported by those at the international level, as no country or region has remained untouched by this gross assault on human life and dignity. We are therefore grateful to our bilateral partners and appreciative of the ongoing partnership that we enjoy with the United Nations system, which assists in the strengthening of our capacity to combat this global scourge.

In closing, Jamaica is resolute in its commitment to promoting and protecting the dignity and rights of all Jamaicans. We reaffirm our determination to do our part to rid the world of such a heinous crime by taking bold, coordinated and intensified action.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Sunesson (Sweden): Sweden aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/72/PV.24) and takes this opportunity to shed some extra light on a couple of issues that we believe are of utmost importance in our mutual quest to eradicate trafficking in persons, in our struggle to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in our efforts to deliver on our promises to help victims of trafficking.

First, we all agree that cooperation among countries is crucial when combating trafficking in persons. Successful cooperation starts with a shared view of the problem and agreement on legal definitions. Therefore, as a start, it is critical that those States Members of the United Nations that have not yet ratified the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols Thereto do so. Another essential element in terms of cooperation is the exchange of data and best practices and information-sharing as to where anti-trafficking projects are being carried out. Equally important is getting a sense of which areas of the world we should get involved in and where we can do more. Sweden recognizes the important roles played by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in achieving that goal.

Secondly, all Member States have agreed to work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth in the 2030 Agenda. It is worth emphasizing the importance of addressing all of the

Agenda's goals and targets relevant to trafficking in persons. I would also like to stress in that regard Sweden's strong belief that selectivity of focus in efforts to achieve the SDGs is counterproductive. All goals relevant to fighting trafficking in persons should be made a priority across the three pillars of the United Nations.

Thirdly, I would like to highlight the issue of eliminating the demand that fosters trafficking in persons. Sweden welcomes a greater focus on reducing demand, and we request that the UNODC produce an annual report that focuses on national efforts to reduce demand for, as an example, cheap labour and women, girls and boys for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

It is crucial that we all undertake measures that promote and ensure decent work and contribute to social and economic integration and equality of treatment. As long as there are weak labour laws, systems or regulations, exploitation will flourish. The same is true with respect to trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation, which disproportionately affects women and girls. In order to reduce demand, policies allowing the purchase of sexual services must be revised. The research and reports from INTERPOL and other agencies is clear: there is a clear nexus between prostitution and trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation.

Last but not least, we would like to raise the important issue of our obligation to deliver on our promises to help victims, which also requires enhanced cooperation among countries. But equally importantly, it requires properly functioning cooperation between Governments and civil society. It is therefore essential that an environment that enables civil-society organizations — providing civil society with the funding it needs — be ensured both nationally and internationally. In this context, Sweden would like to reaffirm its strong support for the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons by pledging a gift of $100,000 to the fund in 2017.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Italy.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/72/PV.24).

The political declaration adopted yesterday (resolution 72/1) summarizes the challenges that Member States and other national and international stakeholders are facing today. I would like to recall the high-level debate that was held on 19 June 2017 in the General Assembly to commemorate Judge Giovanni Falcone, which forged a broad consensus on the central role of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols Thereto, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and a renewed commitment by Member States to implementing the Convention and its Protocols.

I will limit myself to underlining two aspects of the challenges that we face.

First, we need to focus greater attention on the victims, and, secondly, we need to adopt more effective countering measures at the national level.

With regard to the victims of the various forms of trafficking in persons, we agree with the contents of the Political Declaration adopted yesterday. We must be fully aware of the physical and psychological violence that victims suffer. Accordingly, we must guarantee assistance to victims and prevent them from becoming revictimized through indictments for the unlawful conduct in which they were forced to engage. We must enforce their right to have justice served and help them overcome trauma and live in dignity.

Through Law No. 47, of 7 April 2017, the Italian Parliament addressed a growing phenomenon in our country, namely, the protection of unaccompanied minors. The new law harmonizes existing legislation, activates additional resources and identifies protocols and procedures tailored to the specific needs of minors without families on our territory.

It has become quite clear by now that in providing a response for victims of trafficking, national authorities must work in a consistent and coordinated manner to prevent one agency from taking action that counters actions from other agencies. Equally important is coordination at the level of United Nations bodies and international institutions. In that regard, we wish to acknowledge the efforts made and results achieved by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. All of the foregoing requires a clear political will and adequate resources. Italy has decided to contribute $1 million to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons.

As to the second aspect, I would like to make reference to resolution 71/209, which focuses on crime prevention and criminal justice. Adopted by the General Assembly in December 2016 and facilitated by our country, the resolution invites all States to create national contact points and central authorities empowered to foster and render more effective both investigative cooperation and mutual legal assistance among different countries. Contact points and central authorities can also play a fundamental role at the domestic level by facilitating information exchange and collaboration among different national administrations that are called upon to address phenomena related to trafficking in persons.

Italy is committed to fighting international and domestic groups that engage in human trafficking. The growing number of investigations and convictions for such crimes shows that much can be done to this end. But it is precisely the actions of Italian prosecutors and judges that have brought the limits of international cooperation to light as well as the need for all countries to develop adequate legislation and effective transborder institutions.

We are deeply convinced of the importance of these national coordination bodies. On 18 May, we organized a Security Council Arria Formula meeting on central authorities charged with promoting full implementation of the relevant provisions contained in resolution 2322 (2016), adopted by the Security Council on 12 December 2016. In that forum, we presented work done by the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Directorate, the central authority in Italy, to coordinate investigations of transnational crimes in the context of organized crime and terrorism.

In conclusion, every victim of trafficking represents a world that we must protect, and every action against trafficking in persons must be part of a coherent international project. These are the two sides of a hugely complex phenomenon that we must all address together. I am sure that the high-level debate under way and the initiatives that it inspires will make an important contribution to this end.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mrs. Okeke (Nigeria): Nigeria considers the holding of this high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons to be very important in view of the need for global solidarity and cooperation in the fight against the menace of trafficking in persons.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of Friends United against Trafficking in Persons (see A/72/PV.24).

Nigeria is pleased to note that the global community is now developing a mechanism that will ensure the effective and full implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and applauds the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action (resolution 72/1).

The root causes of trafficking are complex and multidimensional. Human trafficking has been linked to poverty and ignoble practices rooted in push-and-pull factors. These push-and-pull factors include, but are not limited to, inadequate employment opportunities, poor living conditions, conflict, wars, famine, loss of livelihood, forced marriages, the dissolution of families and natural disasters. While these factors can also be linked to other vices within a society, they also act as indicators pointing the way towards the potential for trafficking in persons.

Nigeria has not been exempt from this scourge, having been both a destination country and a country of origin, where vulnerable persons, especially young women and boys, have been lured across the Sahara to other continents, Europe in particular. Our Government has zero tolerance for trafficking in human beings, whether young or old, men or women, which is why we have put in place strong institutional and legislative measure to eradicate these inhumane practices and ensure that those engaged in such illegal acts are made to face the full wrath of the law.

Nigeria has long criminalized trafficking in persons and has made serious strides in giving priority to fighting the menace. Among these measures is the establishment the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), which is a permanent mechanism created in 2003 to rescue, assist, support and care for victims of human trafficking and to arrest, prosecute and incarcerate perpetrators.

NAPTIP has remained relevant within our national policy focus. With the establishment of the Agency, the issue of human trafficking has been effectively mainstreamed into broader Government policies and programmes related to economic and social

development, human rights, the rule of law, good governance, education, and natural-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction. NAPTIP has also strengthened partnerships among the Government, civil society, faith-based and religious organizations, the media and various rights groups. The essence of such partnerships is facilitating a working synergy among the various stakeholders so as to effectively craft policies and measures that permanently eradicate trafficking in persons.

Nigeria has continued to review its relevant laws in order to effectively combat this crime. In 2015, Nigeria scaled up the effectiveness of its domestic laws by adopting the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition, Enforcement and Administration) Act of 2015, which expanded the scope of crimes that fall under the rubric of human trafficking to include the exportation of persons for prostitution, the procurement of persons for sexual exploitation, the recruitment of persons under 18 years for prostitution and sexual exploitation, the recruitment of persons under 18 years for pornography, brothels or foreign travel that promotes prostitution and sexual exploitation. The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition, Enforcement and Administration) Act of 2015 has broadened the scope of national legislation against trafficking in such a way that Nigeria could be classified as one of the few countries in the world that has a legislative regime against trafficking in persons that is both potent and operative.

Nigeria has also strengthened its international partnerships and collaborative efforts in the area of fighting trafficking in persons. Our efforts at collaboration have led to the rescue of victims and the prosecution of human traffickers. For example, out of the 345 victims rescued by NAPTIP in the first quarter of this year, 288 rescues — some 83.5 per cent — were the result of international collaboration and partnership.

Nigeria calls on the global community to intensify support for the operation of the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of human trafficking, so as to make it relevant in the fight against trafficking in persons. We call for greater funding and increased donations so as to ensure that the objectives of the fund are fully realized and provide benefit to victims. In the same vein, Nigeria reaffirms its commitment to the efforts being made by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons in their sustained operations to end trafficking. We therefore oppose any attempt to undermine the work of these bodies in their collective efforts to discharge their mandates.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Botswana.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. In this context, I wish to assure him of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of his mandate. I also wish to take this opportunity to commend him for convening this high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Similarly, I commend the facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations, the Permanent Representatives of the State of Qatar and Belgium, for skilfully steering the process that culminated in General Assembly's adoption yesterday of the political declaration on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action (resolution 72/1). A product of extensive consultations with Member States, observers and civil society, the Political Declaration reaffirms our commitment to addressing the growing menace of human trafficking. Accordingly, I would like to pledge Botswana's full support for the Political Declaration and reaffirm my country's commitment to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and in particular its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

In addition to being a State party to the Convention and its Protocol, Botswana has taken stern measures to ensure that human trafficking does not take root in our country. To address the crime of human trafficking, Botswana passed the Anti-Human-Trafficking Act of 2014 and established the Human Trafficking (Prohibition) Committee. Furthermore, and in line with international best practices for dealing with issues of human trafficking, the Committee has developed an anti-human-trafficking national action plan whose comprehensive implementation is estimated to cost $11,118,500.

The Government of Botswana is also cognizant of the fact that, in order for the international community to adequately stem human trafficking, it is important to ensure that funding levels can adequately facilitate the implementation of programmes and planned activities.

In this respect, we commend the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other agencies for their continued support, and I appeal to them to remain steadfast in their collaborative approaches to effectively addressing the crime of human trafficking.

At the regional level, Botswana collaborates with other member States of the Southern African Development Community in a bid to improve data collection and analysis of trafficking in persons. We believe that this will allow us to generate much-needed trend analysis and similar analytical data and reports that could enhance the effectiveness of our anti-human-trafficking initiatives within the region.

Our current national development plan — National Development Plan 11 — recognizes anti-human-trafficking efforts as key and central to attaining the goal of crime reduction under the chapter on governance, safety and security. Botswana also recognizes that the crime of human trafficking transcends all sectors of the economy. Accordingly, we cannot overemphasize the importance of raising awareness and maintaining high-impact information campaigns that will ultimately work to disrupt and dismantle criminal networks and supply chains of human trafficking.

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm Botswana's commitment and solidarity with the international community in addressing the debilitating and dehumanizing crime of human trafficking in order to create a safer and more peaceful world, for the benefit of both present and future generations.

Botswana also fully endorses the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals that advocate for peaceful and just societies across the globe.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Zambia.

Mr. Kapambwe (Zambia): At the outset, I wish to express gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level meeting to appraise the achievements, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the 2010 United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Despite sustained worldwide anti-trafficking efforts, human trafficking continues to pose serious threats to sustainable development, with millions of victims of trafficking, many of whom are children, being denied their human dignity and freedom. Like other developing countries, Zambia has not been spared from this scourge, as victims of trafficking continue to be exploited through domestic servitude in urban areas and through other types of forced labour in the agricultural, textile and construction sectors.

Zambia remains concerned in particular that women and children from developing countries, especially sub-Saharan Africa, continue to be the largest category of victims of trafficking in persons. In order to eliminate all forms of human trafficking, the Zambian Government enacted the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (No. 11) in 2008, the goal of which is to eradicate all forms of trafficking. Subsequently, the Act has been amended to provide for the prohibition, prevention and prosecution of human trafficking, as well as the protection of victims by ensuring physical safety, material support, counselling, rehabilitation, education and skills development.

In addition, the Government has adopted a new national policy that aims to eradicate all forms of human trafficking in the country through combined measures to raise awareness of issues and address the root causes while ensuring that victims are protected and perpetrators are brought to justice. Further, in 2012, the Government adopted a national plan of action to combat human trafficking, which has outlined the minimum requirements for victim care, including the establishment and upgrading of existing shelters to bring them in line with international standards.

For its part, Zambia recognizes the central role played by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the global fight against trafficking in persons, especially in providing assistance to countries towards implementing the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. We also recognize the importance of the prevention of trafficking through awareness-raising campaigns and measures that address the underlying factors that contribute to increasing vulnerability to trafficking, as well as the protection of victims and survivors, and the prosecution of traffickers through enhanced capacity-building of law-enforcement mechanisms. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the adoption of the political declaration (resolution 72/1), which stresses, inter alia, the need to address the underlying factors that render people vulnerable to trafficking, including poverty, discrimination and gender-based violence, unemployment, humanitarian emergencies, social exclusion and marginalization.

I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to working with all stakeholders to ensure the rights of every victim of trafficking to assistance, protection and effective support services. In this regard, we welcome the strong emphasis of the political declaration on support for the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, established in accordance with the 2010 Global Plan of Action.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our commitment to working with partners to enhance the capacity of enforcement officers and develop standard operating procedures for law-enforcement agencies so that they are better able to screen and identify trafficking victims, especially among such vulnerable populations as refugees and migrants and unaccompanied minors.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to commend the Permanent Representatives of Qatar and Belgium for facilitating the negotiations on the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

The Islamic Republic of Iran is committed to preventing and fighting any manifestation of human trafficking and reiterates its determination to take all necessary measures to counter this horrible crime. To this end, the Law on Combating Human Trafficking was adopted by my country's Parliament in 2004 and has been revised once to fill the gaps and strengthen the domestic legal regime. We continue our efforts aimed at effective enforcement of the legislation, including through training of judicial and law-enforcement personnel.

In the global fight against trafficking in persons, it is essential to address all interrelated root causes that make people vulnerable to trafficking. Millions of people, women and girls, as well as young men and boys, have fallen prey to exploitation and trafficking as a direct result of poverty and unemployment. At the same time, foreign interventions and armed conflict have seriously aggravated the conditions that make people vulnerable to trafficking. Interventionist and destabilizing policies around the world, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, have made some countries breeding grounds for criminal networks that engage in trafficking in people in the most vulnerable situations.

Trafficking in persons follows the principles of supply and demand. The supply side cannot be stopped, as long as unrestrained demand for forced labour, prostitution and trafficked organs exists. The complex synergy between trafficking in persons and certain crimes perpetrated by criminal organizations, such as drug trafficking and migrant smuggling, calls for scaled-up international cooperation, including through better information-sharing and provision of capacity-building and technical assistance to developing countries. Meanwhile, the importance of education and raising awareness on human trafficking in countries of origin, transit and destination cannot be overemphasized. End users of the services provided by trafficked persons are as much in need of educating as those at risk of being trafficked.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore the importance of the availability of impartial and reliable data on trafficking in persons at different levels. Member States whose destructive foreign-policy options have left millions of people at risk of being exploited and trafficked have no moral authority to produce politicized reports that disregard the fact that the responsibility for the problem rests with them, and we question their competency and integrity. Meanwhile, we acknowledge the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in producing the biennial *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* as a follow-up to the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We also reaffirm UNODC's central role in promoting the partnership pillar in support of the other pillars of the Plan of Action, which are prevention, protection and prosecution.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States.

Ms. Johnstone (United States of America): It is a privilege to be here today as we assess our progress in preventing and combating human trafficking. In the 17 years since the opening for signature of the historic Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the seven years since the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, our collective understanding of the realities of human

trafficking and its impact on victims and communities has grown significantly.

However, our enforcement of anti-trafficking laws, and the number of victims identified and assisted, remains appallingly low, especially compared to the global estimates of the tens of millions of victims of human trafficking. As traffickers' methods continually evolve and become more sophisticated, fuelled by impunity and billions in illicit profits, we must expand our collective response to their crimes. The United States shares that challenge with all Member States, and we fully acknowledge that it takes a holistic Government response, which must include the investment of significant resources and collaboration with non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the public and, importantly, with survivors of the crime.

The United States takes a victim-centred and trauma-informed approach to assisting survivors of trafficking. Federally funded programmes are available to survivors regardless of their immigration status. We have increased our overall funding for services and consequently the number of survivors who are assisted. During fiscal year 2016, the Department of Justice supported providers offering comprehensive and specialized victim services across the United States with funds totalling $19.7 million. The Department of Health and Human Services also provided $12.3 million for a range of services to foreign and domestic victims, both adults and children.

On the enforcement side, also during fiscal year 2016, federal prosecutors secured 439 convictions of human traffickers for sex- and labour-trafficking offences, an almost 50 per cent increase from the previous year. Multiple agencies across the federal Government, incorporating survivor input, are providing training to relevant stakeholders at the federal, state, local and tribal levels to encourage more consistent application of a victim-centred and trauma-informed approach in all phases of victim identification, assistance, recovery and participation in the criminal justice process.

I am thrilled to report that, in December 2015, our President appointed the first United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking to advise and make recommendations on federal anti-trafficking policies. The Council is composed of 11 human trafficking survivors, and it released its first report last October. The report includes many recommendations, such as for United States-funded service providers to include standardized questions for screening potential survivors, establishing a federal housing preference for survivors and incorporating survivor input into public-awareness efforts.

This month the United States Department of State announced a groundbreaking $25 million award to the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, an initiative that seeks to build country and industry partnerships aimed at reducing the prevalence of modern slavery in specific countries and regions around the world, as well as a public knowledge hub where information and good practices can be shared. It aims to raise commitments of $1.5 billion from other donors. I would like to thank the United Kingdom for Prime Minister May's announcement last week of her country's $20 million matching investment in the Fund.

This year and the next, the State Department and the United States Agency for International Development will commit more than $180 million to results-driven anti-trafficking foreign assistance. Recognizing the devastating impact of sex and labour trafficking on children, the Department of State has also established multi-year, bilateral child-protection compact partnerships with the Governments of Ghana, the Philippines and Peru to build effective systems of justice, prevention and child protection. Those are only a snapshot of the range of programmes the United States has to combat trafficking in persons domestically and abroad. In the past few years, we have also expanded our engagement with the business sector to prevent human trafficking in Government procurement and global supply chains.

The United States Government remains committed to helping survivors of trafficking, putting traffickers in prison and partnering with a broad range of stakeholders and Governments to prevent human trafficking from occurring. We look forward to the day when human traffickers can no longer operate with impunity and there are no more victims.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Australia.

Ms. Bird (Australia): The one key message that I want to convey today is the importance of partnership and regional collaboration in combating trafficking in persons. No one can tackle the issue alone. Last week's launch of the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery and Child Labour, hosted by Alliance 8.7, was a testament

to the progress we can make when we work together. The estimates were produced collaboratively by the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, UNICEF and the Walk Free Foundation, with input from other United Nations agencies.

The alarming figures telling us that more than 40 million people — 70 per cent of them women — were victims of modern slavery in 2016 send a clear message that we will not be in a position to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals unless we take urgent action. Australia welcomes collective efforts to improve international cooperation to address migration and displacement. Whenever people are on the move, they are vulnerable to exploitation. The global compacts on refugees and migration will provide an opportunity to build international consensus for practical action. We also welcome the Secretary-General's call for the global compacts to provide solutions that protect the human rights of all.

Regional action is critical. More than 50 per cent of the people of the world who are subject to forced labour are in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia works closely with its neighbours in South-East Asia to combat trafficking and forced labour, and we fund the largest single anti-trafficking investment in the region. With Indonesia, Australia co-chairs the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. The Bali Process works to improve practical cooperation for addressing regional challenges. We recently launched the Bali Process Business Forum, a regional public-private partnership for tackling trafficking and forced labour. Domestically, Australia is establishing a new reporting requirement that will require large businesses to publish annual statements outlining their actions aimed at addressing modern slavery in supply chains.

We applaud initiatives aimed at prevention, protection and survivor assistance, which is why Australia is a donor to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. However, I cannot conclude without voicing deep concern for the lack of accountability and disregard for safety demonstrated by human traffickers and people smugglers. They continue to exploit opportunities to mislead vulnerable people and we must do more to hold them to account.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Seven years after the General Assembly's adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, that crime remains one of the major challenges facing the international community and a true insult to the dignity of people.

Only by promoting genuine international cooperation under strict observance of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and based on the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its relevant Protocol, will we be able to agree on appropriate ways to combat trafficking in persons. The practice of producing unilateral assessment reports on other States is inadmissible and should be ended.

This problem is very rare in Cuba. In February, we approved a national action plan for the period from 2017 to 2020 for preventing and combating trafficking in persons and protecting its victims that coordinates State and civil-society organizations' efforts to effectively implement our zero-tolerance policy for trafficking in persons. In April, we received a visit from Ms. Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, enabling her to see at first hand the realities of the issue in our country.

We know that much remains to be done. However, Cuba's experience shows that it is possible to achieve results in the fight against trafficking even with few resources, under a tight blockade and in the face of this crime's growing complexity and internationalization. The social policies that we have implemented over almost 60 years of revolution, along with prevention efforts and participation in them by the whole of society, will continue to be keys to success.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Chekkori (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Today's meeting is taking place in an era marked by the massive displacement of populations, particularly refugees fleeing the horrors of war and natural disasters and migrants aspiring to a better future. As a result of their vulnerability, that population is exposed to the risks of trafficking.

Owing to Morocco's geographical location and the cross-border nature of this kind of crime, we have not been spared this problem, particularly since our situation as a country of origin, transit and destination compels us to deploy increasing resources to protect potential victims of trafficking. We firmly believe that today's meeting and the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) will help to galvanize the international community's efforts to prevent and combat all forms of trafficking in persons.

Among the three elements of the Kingdom of Morocco's new migration policy, launched in September 2013, combating trafficking is one of my country's priorities for protecting and promoting human rights and fighting organized crime. Through its national policy on migration and asylum, Morocco is positioning itself as a leading regional player in the fight against human trafficking and migrant smuggling. In its first phase, our policy has helped some 25,000 migrants regularize their status. The second phase will build on that success and what has already been achieved, and will help to facilitate the migrants' integration of migrants through a comprehensive and humane approach aimed at protecting migrants from human-trafficking networks and guaranteeing the rights of refugees and migrants on Moroccan soil. Morocco has taken a series of measures at the national level by upgrading its legal and institutional framework relating to immigration, asylum and trafficking in human beings. Our adoption in 2016 of an anti-trafficking law is further proof of the Kingdom's active commitment.

Morocco has also demonstrated its commitment in the international arena by subscribing to the main human rights conventions on preventing and combating trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and, in April 2011, by ratifying the Convention's Additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. We have also presented our semi-annual plan of action for implementing the Global Programmes against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants at the twenty-sixth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Morocco is one of 13 countries around the world strategically selected to develop and implement national action against the trafficking and smuggling of migrants.

Extreme poverty, inequality, conflict, political and economic instability, human rights violations and a lack of education and opportunities create vulnerabilities that traffickers never fail to exploit. No country can solve the problem of trafficking alone. The solution does not lie in an exclusively security-based approach, but rather requires a comprehensive, multisectoral approach and close cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination in tackling the root causes that lead them to become victims of trafficking networks. The preventive aspect of trafficking is intrinsically linked to the commitment of all to sustainable development, and in that regard, Morocco reiterates its full support for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We take this opportunity to highlight the possibilities offered by the International Conference on Migration in 2018 and the contribution of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, which Morocco co-chairs with Germany, and which provide appropriate opportunities to contribute to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We welcome the content of the Political Declaration on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action (resolution 72/1), to which my country will actively contribute.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Brazil.

Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil): The scourge of human trafficking is one of the most terrible crimes known to humankind and one of the most lucrative forms of transnational crime, along with trafficking in drugs and arms. It mainly affects vulnerable people such as refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons, especially women and girls, and those in situations of conflicts and natural disasters. Trafficked people are treated as objects and often subjected to sexual exploitation, domestic services or forced marriage.

As members of the international community, we must strengthen our efforts to tackle this heinous crime and bring perpetrators to justice. In that regard, Brazil welcomes this opportunity to conduct a fresh appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We believe that a periodic review of the progress that has been made is essential to improving the coordination of our efforts in this area and bringing to our attention

new developments and challenges that have arisen in the past few years.

This is also an occasion for us all to renew our political commitment to eradicating trafficking in persons, while recognizing the multifaceted nature of the problem. The political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), which we adopted yesterday, reaffirms the commitments of Member States in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognizing its integrated and indivisible nature, and thereby confirming the synergy between our efforts to promote development, protect human rights and fight crime, particularly trafficking in persons.

Brazil is of the view that unduly restrictive immigration policies can compound the effects of human trafficking. Adequate and effective strategies for dealing with trafficking in persons must ensure that fundamental rights are respected. The discussions on a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration could therefore make an enormous contribution to our joint efforts to eliminate this heinous crime while safeguarding the rights of those who legitimately seek better living standards in other countries.

Brazil believes that a consistent global network for protecting and assisting victims would discourage demand and prevent re-victimization. Such assistance should be gender- and age-sensitive and take into account the special needs of vulnerable groups. In that regard, I would like to point out that last year Brazil adopted a new national law on the prevention and suppression of domestic and international trafficking in persons and measures designed to help protect and assist victims. It defines trafficking in persons according to the parameters of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, establishes severe penalties for perpetrators and decrees that victims should have legal, social, labour and health support as well as the possibility of being granted residence permits, whether or not they are cooperating with State criminal justice authorities. We are also working on our third national plan to combat trafficking in persons, with the active involvement of civil society.

Brazil attaches great importance to the efforts to enhance international cooperation on the issue of human trafficking undertaken by all Member States, as well as by the Secretary-General, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL and other strategic partners. We also commend the work of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and call for Member States' enhanced engagement in its activities.

In conclusion, Brazil would like to recall that the specific characteristics of trafficking in persons make it an issue that requires a multidisciplinary, integrated strategy. Within the United Nations system, therefore, we should strive for greater coordination by fostering coherence in the efforts of the various entities involved and by ensuring that we keep the best interests and the dignity of victims of trafficking at the centre of our policies.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Denmark.

Mr. Petersen (Denmark): Denmark fully aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the observer of the European Union (see A/72/PV.24), but since the topic of this high-level meeting is an extremely important one, I am pleased to take this opportunity to make a few comments in my national capacity.

The Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons is a significant instrument in the global fight against trafficking in persons. However, that will be true only as long as we collectively secure its implementation, which is why we are here today to assess the achievements and identify the gaps and challenges in this fight. Trafficking in persons is an offence to human dignity and a violation of fundamental freedoms and human rights that knows no national borders, and combating it therefore requires a global effort. Together we must stop these cynical traffickers who exploit people in extremely vulnerable situations and help and protect those who end up in their hands.

Denmark is committed to doing its part. As a candidate for the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period from 2019 to 2021, we will continue to engage in normative work to advance efforts to combat trafficking. Denmark was a sponsor of Security Council resolution 2331 (2016), on trafficking in persons in conflict situations, and during the General Assembly high-level week last week we endorsed the United Kingdom-led call to action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. Denmark's Minister for Foreign Affairs, together with partners from other Member States, hosted a side event that shed

light on trafficking and other forms of modern slavery. We must raise awareness about the issue and make sure that no one can ever say again that they did not know that modern slavery existed.

Human trafficking now constitutes an increasing percentage of organized crime worldwide, which means that our efforts to combat it must be flexible, able to adapt to new trends in order to help victims and prosecute traffickers effectively. That is why Denmark recently decided to further strengthen its national action plan on combating human trafficking with an additional $1.5 million in funds. We must and will continue to step up our game at the national as well as the international level.

The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, plays an important role in our collective efforts, supporting direct specialized assistance to the victims of all forms of human trafficking all over the world. I am therefore pleased to announce a Danish contribution of $160,000 to the Trust Fund. We are proud to support this important effort to help innocent victims.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Mr. Čurin (Slovenia): Slovenia welcomes this high-level meeting and once again expresses its support for the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons adopted yesterday (resolution 72/1).

Slovenia aligns itself with the statements delivered yesterday on behalf of the European Union and by the representative of Panama on behalf of the Human Security Network (see A/72/PV.24). Owing to time constraints, I will deliver a shortened version of my statement, which will be available in full on PaperSmart.

More than a decade ago, trafficking in persons was seen as just one of the forms taken by international crime, but today it is recognized as a multifaceted problem and human rights issue in its own right, constantly evolving, changing and reaching increasingly severe dimensions. Trafficking in persons is based on the exploitation of other human beings. It affects all parts of society and is on its way to becoming a structural element in some economies, but in particular it violates the fundamental rights, freedoms and dignity of its victims.

The fact is that trafficking in persons and related modern forms of slavery are on the increase. The underlying reasons include exploitive tendencies, a loss of values in our consumer societies, global poverty and the increasing demand for cheap labour. Furthermore, trafficking in persons is linked to other areas of social life, such as current migration trends, and in that regard it is about exploiting the vulnerability of people who are on the move. At the same time, it has created new challenges through its relationship to increasingly urgent security issues and economic threats.

For all those reasons, human trafficking is a multidimensional issue and in that context, the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons represents a firm foundation for comprehensive measures at the national level. Slovenia therefore supports global initiatives that should be reflected in measures taken at the national level in all areas of the fight against trafficking in persons. In 2002, Slovenia appointed a national anti-trafficking coordinator, assisted by an inter-ministerial working group, who plays a key role in the preparation and implementation of two-year action plans. The activities in those action plans address various preventive measures and funding for non-governmental organizations involved in programmes for assisting victims.

In most cases, the prosecution of crimes related to trafficking in persons results in the conviction of the offenders, and that has been established practice in Slovenia for the past eight years. The national referral mechanism defines the proactive cooperation required between non-governmental organizations and law-enforcement authorities as well as with other relevant organizations, taking into consideration the victims' best interests. Slovenia played a leading role in implementing two European projects aimed at combating trafficking in persons more effectively in the territory of the Western Balkans and conducting training for law-enforcement authorities in the region.

Also, at Slovenia's initiative an informal network of national anti-trafficking coordinators in South-Eastern Europe was set up in 2010. The network, with the support of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, is still active and meets twice a year.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once more how crucial it is to fully understand the negative effects of human trafficking and the consequences of

the phenomenon for its victims, who suffer day after day, many of whom become victims more than once. Awareness of these things first needs to grow in the mind of each of us. Only then will we be able to use the existing mechanisms and take effective action as a society and as institutions.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Myanmar.

Mr. Suan (Myanmar): We welcome the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

The menace of trafficking in persons — modern-day slavery — is increasingly threatening millions of people around the world. It is alarming to note that the recent Global Report on Trafficking in Persons of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlighted a significant increase in the number of victims trafficked for forced labour — approximately four in 10 victims detected were trafficked for that purpose. According to estimates from the International Labour Organization, more than 20 million labourers are being exploited in economic activities.

Therefore we fully share the concern about this new phenomenon, which is a revival of slavery. It cannot be resolved by actions of Governments alone. We need to engage constructively with the private sector. In this regard, I thank the Governments of Australia and Indonesia for their initiative in organizing the Bali Process Government and Business Forum on 25 August in Perth, Australia.

Myanmar has been fighting the issue of trafficking in persons as a national cause for 20 years, that is, since 1997. As a source country of many trafficked victims, Myanmar has stepped up its efforts to fight trafficking in persons. We are focusing our actions in the areas of prevention, protection and prosecution. The number of personnel dedicated to our anti-trafficking law-enforcement units has been increased. Awareness-raising activities have been conducted across the country.

The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law was enacted in Myanmar in 2005. Since then, we have put in place national plans of action to combat trafficking in persons. We have reviewed our 2012-2016 National Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking and found five distinct forms of human trafficking, namely, forced marriage, forced labour, prostitution, child trafficking and debt bondage. A total of 237 forced-labour cases outside the country were detected in the period from 2006 to 2017. The areas of activity where Myanmar migrant workers suffer most from human trafficking and exploitation are fisheries, the seafood industry, agriculture, prostitution and domestic work.

Poverty, overpopulation and the lack of job opportunities in many less-developed countries are indeed a push factor. At the same time, there are industries hunting for cheap and unregulated labourers, which is obviously a demand, or pull, factor. In the absence of inclusive and effective bilateral or regional mechanisms to address the issue, that vacuum is conveniently exploited by traffickers. The Government of Myanmar is therefore closely cooperating with the countries in its region, particularly with the countries that receive a large number of Myanmar migrant workers, by means of bilateral agreements and establishing other appropriate mechanisms for regularizing the status of these workers.

In January 2017, Myanmar ratified the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. We are working closely not only with countries in the region but also with United Nations agencies, particularly UNODC, in the fight against trafficking in persons.

We also share the concern that people fleeing across the border to Bangladesh could fall into the hands of traffickers. The terrorist attacks by the so-called Arankan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) on 25 August 2017 in northern Rakhine state have caused the loss of lives and property and the displacement of people. Many have fled across the border to Bangladesh. There are several reasons for that exodus. Prominent among them is the fear factor. Following the terrorist attacks and the resultant security operations, most of the women and children were forced to flee. The men were conscripted to join the ARSA in the fight against the security forces. Many villagers were intimidated into fleeing to the Bangladeshi side of the border so that they could attract international attention. The scorched-earth policy employed by the terrorists is another factor.

Myanmar will do its utmost to prevent people from becoming victims of traffickers. We all have to be alert

and prevent any trafficker or criminal network from exploiting this situation. Myanmar is ready to work with all countries to eliminate modern-day slavery.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Austria.

Mr. Kickert (Austria): The fight against trafficking in persons requires greater resolve from us than ever. It is a serious crime and a gross violation of human rights that continues to affect all regions of the world. The testimony of survivors of trafficking, such as the statement by Ms. Grizelda Grootboom yesterday (see A/72/PV.24), is a painful wake-up call for us to realize that we continue to fail to protect the most vulnerable. We, the community of States, have to try harder for the sake of those who are still suffering. We have to take care of those who are at risk, vulnerable or exposed to arbitrary conditions. We have to stop impunity and bring perpetrators to justice.

Austria is both a transit and destination country for human trafficking. Human trafficking in Austria predominantly involves cases of sexual exploitation but also labour exploitation and forced begging. A task force on combating human trafficking comprising both Government entities and non-governmental organizations elaborates national action plans with concrete measures on how best to tackle trafficking comprehensively and monitors the implementation of those plans.

Recently, Austria has been affected by large mixed migration movements. Against that backdrop, we are paying particular attention to the interlinkages between migration movements and trafficking in persons. We have intensified measures to identify victims or those at risk of being trafficked in order to prevent trafficking, assist victims and work more effectively to prosecute perpetrators. Furthermore, Austria is currently supporting projects of regional and international organizations dedicated to identifying and assisting victims of trafficking along migration routes. In that context, we welcome the special attention that has been given to the issue of trafficking in persons in the preparation process for the global compact for migration, in particular in the framework of the fifth informal thematic session that took place in Vienna just three weeks ago.

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, remains the cornerstone of global action against human trafficking, with its almost-universal ratification. Through its comprehensive approach it defines and enables effective cooperation among States to prevent and combat trafficking and to protect and assist victims. With the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the issue has been kept high on the international agenda. It has also encouraged States to ratify and effectively implement the provisions of the Protocol.

We particularly commend the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking, established through the Global Plan of Action, for its successful work. It is an important instrument that merits our continuous and strengthened support. The fund has facilitated direct assistance to approximately 2,500 victims every year, but that is but a fraction of the total number of victims. Many projects are waiting for the necessary funds. Austria has contributed to the fund throughout the past years and will continue to do so this year, and the next and the ones to follow.

Austria advocates for a victim-centred approach, with a focus on preventing trafficking in persons and protecting victims of trafficking or of other serious forms of exploitation. In many countries there is still a lack of awareness that trafficked persons are not offenders. Unless they are identified and recognized as victims of crime, they will be doubly punished.

Another important outcome of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons has been the biennial Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Data collection and analysis is indispensable to identify necessary and effective measures to counter trafficking in persons. In this context, Austria would like to take this opportunity to express its support for the activities of UNODC in the fight against trafficking in persons and in assistinag Member States. In particular, UNODC assists Member States in translating political will into concrete action. It also coordinates multilateral efforts through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group.

We very much welcome the presence of so many civil-society participants among us. The expertise and practical support of non-governmental organizations are vital, especially in the context of victim protection and measures to prevent human trafficking. Moreover,

national human rights institutions, academia, the private sector and the media can and do play a central role in the framework of the coordinated efforts to combat human trafficking.

Trafficking in persons has, if anything, become more complex over the years. We cannot disregard the broader context in which human trafficking evolves and that continues to nurture this inhumane business. With the ongoing implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, we will create an environment more conducive to helping address the root causes of trafficking in persons.

While, at this meeting we are taking stock of the progress achieved in the past years, a lot of pressing work and serious challenges lie ahead. Let us be guided by putting into action the word and spirit of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons that we adopted. Today is the time to act, not tomorrow.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Albano (Portugal): Portugal is fully committed to the prevention of and fight against trafficking in persons.

We welcome the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) that the Assembly adopted. Portugal is proud to have co-facilitated, together with Cabo Verde, the very first Global Action Plan, in 2010. All of our actions are in line with the most relevant international human rights instruments and development frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Since 2012, Portugal has been part of the Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking, aimed at raising global awareness, and since then we proudly use the Blue Heart in all national campaigns and actions. In spite of all the anti-trafficking initiatives developed in Portugal over the last decade, much more remains to be done in the face of such a complex, multidimensional and constantly changing phenomenon.

Portugal is currently starting to prepare its fourth national action plan, which will consolidate a victim- and gender-based approach already contained in our first such plan. Portugal provides support to all victims of trafficking in persons, both national and foreign. Victims have the right to subsistence, access to appropriate and urgent medical treatment, psychological assistance, protection, translation and interpretation services and free legal advice under the stipulations of the law. Portugal has three shelters that provide support to women and men identified as victims of trafficking, regardless of their nationality, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, political orientation, socioeconomic aspects or any other status. That support is also extended to minor children of the victims.

The implementation of the National Trafficking Victims Support and Protection Network was a decisive factor in improving consolidation and coordination among Government institutions such as the police forces and the justice system, among others, and civil society at the level of intervention with victims of trafficking. That network provides a mechanism for cooperation and information-sharing among stakeholders for purposes of the prevention, protection and reintegration of victims of human trafficking. That is particularly relevant in regard to children, as they are disproportionately vulnerable to trafficking in persons.

The creation in 2008 of the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings has allowed Portugal to reinforce its national referral mechanisms and to consolidate data-collection systems and the exchange of information for the development of evidence-based policies. We need to know how to intervene.

All Member States hold the collective responsibility to combat this heinous crime. To do so, we need to cooperate and implement all the four "P's" — prevention, protection, prosecution and, most importantly, partnerships, as they will allow us to be one step ahead of the criminal networks and traffickers responsible for this global scourge.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Ms. Peláez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I want to take this opportunity, on my own behalf and on behalf of my country, to reiterate our appreciation for all the expressions of solidarity we have received from the international community following the earthquakes in Mexico in recent weeks. We will not forget it. Our sympathy and support are with the countries affected by the recent hurricanes.

On behalf of the Government of Mexico, we welcome the decision of the General Assembly to convene this

meeting to review progress in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and to jointly address the challenges that persist and that are still before us. We recognize that the factors linked to the disparate and inequitable development that led the United Nations to approve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are echoed in the undeniable relationship between marginalization and inequality, which is a factor in the victimization of people who are trafficked. That was expressed in the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) approved yesterday, and that calls us to produce policies of greater reach and aimed at the development of our nations and the people living in them.

The Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons emphasizes the contribution made at regional levels that complements and reinforces collective actions to combat this scourge, but we wish to emphasize the need to align the objectives and strategies of the many global programmes and plans, thereby ensuring the effectiveness of national actions and the achievement of multilateral objectives.

The Government of Mexico, as an actor with global responsibility, renews its support for multilateral efforts to eradicate trafficking in persons and respects its commitment to the victims of these crimes, implementing development policies centred on the individual to attack extreme poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and lack of opportunities. We are promoting social prevention of violence and delinquency. Those measures will allow us to make progress in implementing the commitments that we adopted in the 2030 Agenda and in the Global Plan of Action.

Thanks to the latter, we have a robust legal framework for assisting and protecting the victims of these crimes. It incorporates a human rights perspective and gender and age considerations. We have increased sentences against traffickers, and in four years we have doubled the number of investigations of these crimes. We are currently implementing a national anti-trafficking programme, and for the first time we have an integral reparation fund for the victims. The participation and partnership we have built with academic institutions and civil society to improve the work of the State are indispensable in these tasks.

We are aware of the challenges ahead. In order to measure and improve the performance of the Mexican State with regard to this crime, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime carried out, at the request of the Mexican Government, a national diagnosis. We are working in coordination with states and municipalities to overcome the gaps identified and to strengthen local capacities. As part of those efforts, we are setting up the National Information System against Trafficking in Persons, which will give us a robust database. Among other things, that will align our care and protection services for the victims with civil-society information, thus improving the generation of reports, tools and maps that will heighten our investigation and prosecution activities, on the one hand, and our prevention and protection activities for the victims, on the other.

To intensify strategies for prevention and reporting among particularly vulnerable populations, with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, we launched the Blue Heart 2.0 Campaign against Trafficking in Persons — Mexico#AquíEstoy — to give a voice to the victims of these crimes and to promote a single national number for citizens to report them.

Mexico identifies as an important challenge within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Action Plan the active participation of the productive sector. Industrialists, businesses and businesspeople, and workers' unions should help make visible human trafficking and exploitation in all its forms, and help fight it.

Trafficking affects all regions of the world. It is a global phenomenon, so we must find local solutions as countries of origin, transit and destination. According to data from the International Labour Organization, this crime is one of the most lucrative areas for organized crime. The formal production sector cannot remain apart from efforts to make human trafficking visible.

Trafficking and its profits are a product of the permanent violation of the right to dignity of persons. We must be responsible as consumers, and States should facilitate awareness-raising by establishing rules so that the goods and services that societies consume are expressed in terms of human value. We must transform our systems of consumption, giving producers of goods and services incentives to make the value chains transparent. And we must invest more in the human being. We must make the most of the ability

of advertising and marketing to influence society, redirecting consumption to make it more responsible.

We urgently need to promote social mobilization in favour of asserting the rights of all persons. We must rescue those who are being exploited. It depends on every human being on the planet being aware of others, as the best way to make the status of servant and slave vanish from the face of the Earth. Until that time comes, every human being who is aware of human trafficking must contribute to its eradication.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Catapang (Philippines): Trafficking in persons is a heinous crime that victimizes the most vulnerable members of society. As we come together to examine our efforts, guided by the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, let us reaffirm our resolve to assist and protect the victims, prosecute and punish the perpetrators and end its occurrence.

Over 10 million Filipinos work outside of the Philippines. As that represents approximately 10 per cent of our population, it imperative for us to provide a mantle of protections for our Filipino migrants. The Philippines has established a comprehensive mechanism to protect them, based upon a framework of laws, regulations, policies, programmes and institutions, using a migrant-centred approach to the entire migration cycle, from pre-employment, transit and on-site employment to return migration and reintegration.

Through the Migrant Workers Act, we have strengthened the regulation of recruitment agencies to prevent abuse and maltreatment abroad and have prescribed minimum wages for our domestic workers through standardized contracts wherever possible. On the other hand, the amended Anti-Trafficking Act criminalizes even attempted trafficking, making it punishable by imprisonment. The liabilities of accessories and accomplices to human trafficking activities have also been spelled out.

The Philippines underscores the need for a creative, multidisciplinary, multisectoral and comprehensive approach. To that end, the Government established the Inter-Agency Council against trafficking, composed of representatives of relevant Government agencies, civil society organizations, faith-based groups and the private sector, among others.

Concerted efforts, especially through the Council, have resulted in the successful prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking. From 2005 to June 2017, the Philippines has had a total of 297 convictions, involving 317 perpetrators. In 2016, for example, 44 cases of trafficking in persons produced 53 convictions, 36 of which involved sentences to life imprisonment. Just from January to June this year, the Philippines has had 23 convictions for human trafficking.

For the Philippines, our commitment to battle trafficking in women and girls is manifest in our submission since 1994 of a General Assembly resolution on trafficking in women and girls. Resolution 71/167 recognizes the importance of a revitalized global partnership to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It calls for further work to understand the link between migration and trafficking in persons and to develop more effective responses to eliminate the risk of trafficking in the migration process.

That resolution also recognizes the heightened vulnerability to trafficking in humanitarian crisis situations. In response, last year the Philippines passed into law the Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act. It dictates that during a state of national or local calamity, the police, military and Government-service providers shall immediately undertake comprehensive measures and monitoring to prevent child trafficking for labour or sexual exploitation.

For the Philippine Government, adopting an approach involving one country team and multiple stakeholders has proved to be effective. It consolidates the mandates, efforts, resources and interests of the various duty-bearers and stakeholders in coming up with a robust response. It has also enabled us to mainstream the interventions down to the grass-roots level by activating local structures at the village, city and municipal level, such as the Council against Trafficking and Violence against Women and Children.

We have also forged bilateral agreements with migrant-destination countries to protect Filipino workers, entered into a regional agreement in the Association for Southeast Asian Nations for closer collaboration and pursued partnerships with multilateral agencies. We likewise actively participate in regional forums, such as the Australia-Asia Programme against Trafficking in Persons and the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016* highlights the magnitude of this continuing problem. More than ever, the need for a strong political will and decisive, concerted action at the global level cannot be overemphasized. While we note a significant increase in the number of parties to the relevant United Nations conventions on trafficking in persons, we continue to urge those States that have not ratified them to finally consider doing so. We appreciate the vital role of the UNODC in that respect, particularly in its efforts to capacitate States by providing technical assistance.

The Philippines has been a supporter of the United Nations voluntary trust fund to protect victims of human trafficking, recognizing its valuable work with survivors. As a gesture of our continuing commitment, the Philippines commits to contributing a modest sum of $10,000 to that fund.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Peru.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to thank the Ambassadors of Greece, Qatar and Belgium for their excellent work as facilitators of the resolution on modalities (resolution 71/287) and the political declaration we adopted yesterday (resolution 72/1). In the political declaration, we reaffirmed our will and commitment to the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the obligations it sets out that we have assumed: preventing crime, protecting and assisting victims, prosecuting perpetrators and reinforcing partnerships for more efficient and coherent joint action.

Trafficking in persons is a phenomenon as complex as the horrors it generates, in which the individual, in addition to being deprived of freedom, is deprived of humanity — exploited as a commodity in prostitution networks, performing forced labour or being a victim of the sale of organs to the highest bidder. In that regard, trafficking is embedded in various dynamics that must be carefully addressed, such as its relation to other crimes; the use of social networks to capture the victims; the greater vulnerability of women, adolescents, children, migrants and refugees; and in some cases, its use in situations of armed conflict.

We in Peru have developed a national plan against trafficking in persons 2017-2021, framed in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, adopted in Palermo, Italy. Our plan deploys a compete, comprehensive and coordinated strategy. It is complete because of its focus on four axes of priority: caring for the victims; governance, prevention and awareness-raising; protection and reintegration; and investigation and prosecution. It is comprehensive because trafficking in persons is related to other crimes, such as the illegal smuggling of migrants, and we also take into account the structural elements that lead to greater vulnerability. And it is coordinated because we must strengthen the collaboration between the different levels of government and civil-society participation.

Governments have a great responsibility, but we cannot fight this fight alone. The support of the United Nations is indispensable, and the role of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) is crucial for consistency. We would like to take the opportunity to welcome the work of all of the members of ICAT, especially the coordinating role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which also publishes the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, which is very useful to us.

The specific circumstances and common challenges in certain regions underscore the relevance of also providing support to regional organizations, for example, the Second Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in persons in the Western Hemisphere 2015-2018. Among the objectives of that Plan are increasing awareness of the population and reducing situations of vulnerability to prevent crime.

On the bilateral level, I would like to highlight the initiative of the so-called legal protection belts against trafficking in persons, which we have been implementing with our neighbouring countries.

To conclude, let me reaffirm Peru's commitment to implementing the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and my delegation's commitment to constructively participating in the review processes.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Paraguay.

Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Paraguay joins the voices condemning trafficking in persons — a crime that violates human dignity. It is incompatible with respect for human rights and has harmful effects on the sustainable development of States and on the promotion of peaceful, just and inclusive societies, free of fear and violence.

In accordance with our international obligations, Paraguay has adopted specific measures to prevent and punish this crime. Since 2005, we have had an inter-institutional bureau, composed of governmental institutions, civil society and international organizations. In a coordinated and collaborative manner, it undertakes actions for a multidimensional approach to trafficking in persons.

In terms of public policies, the National Policy on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons is in force. It establishes the principles, approaches and strategic axes for prevention, investigation, criminal sanctions, protection and comprehensive care of victims. Its principles prioritize caring for children and adolescents. Similarly, in 2012 the comprehensive law against trafficking in persons was enacted. It aims to prevent and punish that crime, whether within the country or abroad, and it provides a framework of comprehensive protection for victims, whether primary or secondary.

Furthermore, in my country the expected maximum sentence is up to 20 years in prison for those who capture, transport, transfer or receive d..ect victims of trafficking. Moreover, I would highlight the recent adoption of the National Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons. It is a tool that draws up the road map for institutions responsible for dealing with structural problems that expose people to situations that make them vulnerable to human trafficking.

With respect to mixed migratory movements, the mission of Paraguay, through the National Commission for Refugees, is to provide protection and assistance to potential victims of trafficking in persons from such movements.

Trafficking in persons affects all countries and regions, but it strikes harder at those for whom the factors that make people most vulnerable to this crime — poverty, unemployment, lack of socioeconomic opportunities, gender violence, discrimination and marginalization — are a constant reality.

Paraguay calls on the international community to give due consideration to the following issues.

First, migration should not be criminalized, and a security approach to it should be eschewed. States should promote open, safe and regular migration channels, which would contribute to the eradication of trafficking in persons. Secondly, the link between trafficking in persons and drug trafficking cannot remain invisible. Thirdly, trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation must be expressly included in international instruments and national legislation as a criminal offense, so that the criminal prosecution of offenders is effective. Fourthly, cooperation among States is essential, especially as regards assistance, the repatriation of victims and transnational prosecution of the crime.

In conclusion, I reiterate Paraguay's commitment to combating all forms of trafficking in persons, and I express our willingness to continue to collaborate with regional and international efforts aimed at that goal.

Yesterday I was awarded this Blue Heart for the expertise of my delegation. They explained its significance to me, and I would like to make an appeal in that regard. It is of utmost importance that, in addition to wearing such a pin on our lapels, we hold this issue close to our hearts, at the forefront of our minds and in our actions, so that we will be able to successfully fight this scourge, which affects all of our countries and constitutes a true attack on human dignity.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Govind (India): At the outset, on behalf of my country, let me convey our deep appreciation for the commendable efforts made by the Permanent Representatives of Qatar and Belgium, as co-facilitators of resolution 72/1, helping us to translate our collective commitment into a political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. I would also thank the President for organizing this high-level meeting.

A deliberation on combating trafficking has special significance today, as the mass exodus of people in distress in different parts of the world is making them increasingly vulnerable to trafficking.

We have progressed since the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in July 2010. The four Ps — prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership — have become the keystones of institutional architecture at national, regional and international levels.

The Government of India has accorded the highest priority to combating trafficking. It has adopted

a multi-pronged and multi-stakeholder approach to tackling this multidimensional problem. Those holistic steps and strategies are not restricted to direct intervention against trafficking in isolation. India's anti-trafficking legislative framework is based on the bedrock of article 23 of our Constitution, which prohibits trafficking and forced labour. India has a strong and effective legislative framework to address the issue of trafficking, including the protection of children and women from sexual exploitation and the prohibition of bonded and child labour, the transplantation of human organs and selling and buying for the purpose of prostitution.

With the amendment of our criminal law in 2013, trafficking has been defined comprehensively and provisions have been made for the stringent punishment of traffickers. We have also initiated the process of formulating comprehensive legislation on trafficking of persons, covering all of its aspects, including prosecution, prevention; protection of victims, witnesses and complainants; and the rehabilitation of victims.

For the prevention and faster investigation of crimes of trafficking, 264 anti-human-trafficking units and 150 specialized investigative units for crime against women have been set up across the country. Capacity-building of law-enforcement agencies and the judiciary to ensure a faster criminal justice response has been accorded high priority.

A comprehensive scheme entitled Ujjwala, meaning "bright future", has been introduced to facilitate the rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficking victims. It also facilitates the repatriation of cross-border victims. Special drives, such as Operation Smile, are conducted regularly for rescued trafficked children. Innovative use of information technology, such as the Track Child and Khoya-Paya portals, and strong standard operating procedures for law-enforcement agencies have been met with success. Similarly, railways have also issued standard operating procedures, in accordance with the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2000.

India's endeavour is to eradicate trafficking by empowering the vulnerable sections of our society, including through the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to strengthen international cooperation, India signed the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Convention on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and bilateral memorandums of understanding with the Government of Bangladesh in 2015 and with the United Arab Emirates in January 2017.

Despite collective efforts at the national, regional and international levels, the battle against the scourge of human trafficking is far from over. In implementing the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons within the framework of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Supplementary Protocols — of which India is a signatory — the focus also needs to be on development issues in the countries of origin and demand for trafficked persons for exploitative purposes in destination countries.

We need to redouble our efforts and adopt a multi-pronged strategy. India stands firmly committed to working with the international community in its battle against trafficking in persons.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Cameroon.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): It should be recalled that this high-level meeting follows the decision of the General Assembly in 2013 to evaluate the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted in 2010, every four years. It should be underlined that the Global Plan is an expression of Member States' firm determination to prevent and combat trafficking, protect and assist victims, prosecute their perpetrators and foster partnerships to strengthen coordination and cooperation in that area.

Trafficking in human beings is exacerbated by the increase in migratory movements. Those movements place migrants in a precarious and vulnerable situation that encourages trafficking in human beings, especially women and children. At a time when terrorism is increasing in all parts of the world, migrants, refugees and displaced persons are the most sought-after targets for all kinds of abuses.

The actions of the terrorist sect Boko Haram, which is affiliated with the powerful jihadist movement Da'esh, provide a strong example of that. In what could be called a new form of trafficking in human beings, that sect recruits or kidnaps, by force or with the promise of money, girls and boys, often adolescents. Sometimes

those adolescents are exchanged for ransom, sometimes they are forcibly married or reduced to sexual slavery. Sometimes they are indoctrinated, including through physical abuse and threats of death or even execution, whether by drugs or explosives belts and being sent as human bombs into civilian populations, places of worship, markets, festivities or funerals. On 25 January 2016, four young female kamikazes exploded their bombs in a market in the extreme north of my country, killing 32 people and wounding more than 60.

That underscores the importance of implementing the Global Plan of Action to combat this scourge. Cameroon is firmly committed in that regard, and our country has taken steps to effectively combat all forms of trafficking. Those steps include the strengthening of the political, institutional and legal frameworks. They also include awareness-raising, education, training and protection and care for victims, and repression.

In that regard, our country has reaffirmed the principal international conventions on the issue, particularly the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention No. 105 and the Minimum Age Convention No. 138 of the International Labour Organization, and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto.

On 14 December 2011, Cameroon adopted a law on combating trafficking in persons. It regularly organizes awareness-raising and information campaigns in the most exposed regions of the country. All of those actions are coordinated, at the level of the Prime Minister, by an interministerial committee created for that purpose.

In addition, in order to increase the visibility and coordination of our actions to combat human trafficking at the regional level, our country is part of the group of West and Central African States, which has set up multidisciplinary coordination structures. The roles assigned to those structures include the collection of information on the treatment of persons, coordination of the efforts of Governments and partners, the collection of data, the protection of victims and, in some countries, the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of such crimes. That initiative enjoys the technical support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which my country wishes to commend once again. We also call for contributions to the fund set up to aid victims of trafficking in order to provide victims with the assistance and protection that they need.

In the light of all that is ongoing, my country fully aligns itself with the political declaration (resolution 72/1) adopted by consensus at the high-level meeting, which is aimed at giving new impetus to all actions taken at the national, regional and global levels to combat trafficking in human beings, as envisaged in the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons of 2010. Human dignity is at stake, and it should not suffer any harm.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of the Bahamas.

Ms. Carey (Bahamas): As an archipelagic nation with a vast ocean area, the Bahamas experiences large mixed migration from within the Caribbean region and from South and Central America, Europe and Asia. Because we are geographically located next to a major destination country, our porous borders render us ideally suited as a transit point for illicit trafficking activities. Trafficking in persons is no exception.

The Bahamas considers trafficking in persons a heinous crime. Accordingly, we have committed to taking a very proactive approach to combat it. In September 2008, the Bahamas became a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto. In 2008, the Bahamas enacted the trafficking in persons prevention and suppression act, a comprehensive and wide-ranging piece of legislation that, inter alia, criminalizes trafficking in persons and prescribes strict penalties for all aspects of the crime, including withholding of travel documents and work permits. The legislation includes the full range of protection for victims of trafficking, including exemption from customary immigration sanctions.

In collaboration with the non-governmental organization (NGO) community, the Government of the Bahamas produced the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas National Anti-trafficking in Persons Strategy for the period 2014-2018. The Strategy is intended to engender collective understanding and coordinated action among stakeholders and actors and to ensure the financial support of local and international donors. It reflects the guiding principles of the efforts of the Bahamas to combat trafficking in persons, including civil-

society participation, observance of human rights, and interdisciplinary and cross-sectional approaches.

Several national bodies on trafficking in persons have been established in the Bahamas, including a coordinating group for policy matters, a task force responsible for operational matters and units in the office of the Attorney General and the Royal Bahamas Police Force. The Government of the Bahamas, in collaboration with the NGO community, is conducting a nationwide campaign to raise public awareness about trafficking in persons in the Bahamas, through education programmes for students, vulnerable populations, the business community, the public and Government officials. The Department of Labour screens for indicators of trafficking when inspecting worksites. It also advises job seekers about potential fraudulent recruitment practices in tourism-related industries.

General standing operating procedures for victim identification, protection and referral and specific procedures for data collection and victim care have been developed. The Government has increased funding for victim assistance, initiated several labour- and sex-trafficking investigations, screened potential victims and identified several trafficking victims. In August, two people were convicted of trafficking-in-persons offences, and several trials are ongoing, both in the Magistrate's Court and in the Supreme Court. In addition, the Bahamas' action plan relative to combating trafficking in persons has been adopted by other Caribbean countries as a model.

The sample of initiatives I just mentioned demonstrates that the Bahamas is very serious about eliminating trafficking in persons. While we have made significant strides in that regard, including the enhancement of legislative and policy environments, the Bahamian Government will continue to promote strong collaboration across multiple Government agencies to facilitate the prosecution of traffickers and the protection of victims.

Recognizing the vast reach of human trafficking rings and their links with drug trafficking, money-laundering, terrorism financing and illegal migration networks, we believe that trafficking in persons is an issue that must be addressed by the international community. With our limited resources, we cannot combat by ourselves a crime that operates on a global scale. The Bahamas believes that it is only through global partnership that we can secure a sustainable and peaceful future.

We are pleased about the adoption yesterday of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), and pleased to participate in this high-level meeting on trafficking in persons. We look forward to continuing dialogue on ways to foster international coordination and cooperation in preventing and combating trafficking in persons and protecting victims of such trafficking.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Jung Min Seo (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Korea, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the United Nations for its tireless efforts aimed at combating human trafficking and for convening this high-level meeting. I also welcome the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), which emphasizes our unified will to cope with this issue.

Seven years have elapsed since the General Assembly adopted the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. The Global Plan remains an important framework in addressing this ongoing challenge. This heinous and multifaceted crime preys on vulnerable individuals and thrives in situations of conflict. The United Nations Global Plan of Action is designed to effectively tackle this serious human rights crime in terms of preventing human trafficking, protecting and assisting victims, prosecuting perpetrators and strengthening partnerships.

The Korean Government supports the Global Plan of Action and has taken measures to put an end to trafficking in persons in accordance with the United Nations blueprint. In 2013, we codified human trafficking as a serious crime in our domestic legislation. In 2015, we ratified the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Prevention plays a large role in bringing about an end to this crime. Prevention involves capacity-building at the national level and addressing social inequalities and gender discrimination, among other root causes. In

that regard, Korea believes that, in order to strengthen our ability to prevent this crime, the best practices and lessons learned in countering human trafficking should be more actively shared and promoted across the globe.

Another important aspect is the protection of, and assistance for, victims. This crime often targets society's most vulnerable members, making it all the more necessary for policies to be formulated using a victim-centred approach.

The strengthening of partnerships is also important, since human trafficking is by its very nature a transnational activity. The perpetrators of these crimes thrive in the shadows of lawlessness and must be brought to justice through the coordinated efforts of Member States.

Finally, my delegation would like to emphasize its policy support for the public-sector, private-sector and civil-society entities that are fully and cooperatively engaged in the fight against trafficking in persons. The Korean Government believes that the United Nations Global Plan of Action rightly stresses the need for partnership-building and fully supports United Nations efforts aimed at encouraging cooperation at all levels, promoting effective mutual legal assistance and criminal extradition, strengthening public-private and civil-society partnerships and bolstering cooperation among law-enforcement agencies. My Government recognizes the urgency of this challenge and is committed to providing its full support in a fight that pits the darkest elements of our society against its most vulnerable elements.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): I would like to thank the facilitators, Qatar and Belgium, for their efforts in preparing this important event. The call of the political declaration on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) will provide a new stimulus in our efforts to fight human trafficking of all kinds, including forced labour, slavery and similar practices. I would like to make three major points.

First, I would like to underline Germany's strong commitment to combating human trafficking. Our resolutions in the Human Rights Council, submitted together with the Philippines, are based on our firm belief that victims of trafficking need to be protected and assisted, with full respect for their human rights. Traffickers treat their victims as mere commodities to create as much profit as possible, or sometimes even to satisfy a sadistic craving for power. Surely we cannot let such a gross abuse of human dignity continue in our time. We as States must ensure that we effectively implement existing international standards to protect the human rights of the victims. We must also ensure that victims have access to remedies to address alleged abuses and violations without fear of blacklisting, detention or deportation.

Germany is co-financing various projects to combat trafficking in human beings, for example, in Mauritania and the Central African Republic, along with the International Organization for Migration, and in the Sahel region, with INTERPOL. We have also invited Ms. Nadia Ahmed, the Yazidi human rights activist and the first Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and some 1,000 other traumatized refugees from northern Iraq, to Germany.

Secondly, human trafficking is often a transnational crime that can be fought only through international cooperation in the areas of prevention, prosecution and victim protection. The necessity to cooperate becomes more pressing as we see the number of refugees and migrants worldwide increase and acknowledge that they are particularly vulnerable and may easily fall prey to traffickers. The basis for our cooperation is the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. We should all ratify and implement these legal instruments in order to ensure strong foundations for the rule of law.

My third, and last, point is that preventing human trafficking has many facets. If we take labour exploitation as an example, millions of people are part of global supply chains, and some of them work in exploitative and often harmful or dangerous conditions. Companies with international supplier chains have a responsibility to ensure good working conditions for their employees. The German 2016 national action plan on business and human rights expects companies to exercise human rights due diligence. The action plan and our 2014 partnership for sustainable textiles initiative are just two examples of the endeavours we

have undertaken to improve trade and supply-chain standards and to fight labour exploitation worldwide.

Human trafficking is despicable because of the suffering it inflicts on the most vulnerable. Let us redouble our efforts to protect victims and fight human trafficking in all its forms.

The Acting President: I now give the floor the Chair of the delegation of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our delegation welcomes the adoption by consensus of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

We align ourselves with the joint statement made on behalf of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking (see A/72/PV.24), and we note the active efforts of the delegation of Belarus in coordinating the Group's work.

Tangible results in fighting a threat as serious as human trafficking can be achieved only if there is political will, a joining of Government efforts with those of business and civil society, and balanced attention given to the countries of origin and destination of these living commodities. In today's world, there is growing understanding of the fact that a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, assistance for victims and prosecution of perpetrators is needed to address the problem of trafficking. Human trafficking is linked to continuing disparities in the socioeconomic development of countries and regions, greater flows of refugees and illegal migrants, and increased activity among international criminal organizations. In the context of the work to prevent human trafficking, it is necessary to eradicate the root causes, in particular a legalized sex industry, the demand for a cheap and disenfranchised workforce, poverty and unemployment.

Our country is a signatory to many international treaties on this issue. In July in Moscow, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs held an international conference on public-private partnerships to combat human trafficking. It brought together 200 participants from 40 States. The meeting provided us with an opportunity to hold a meaningful discussion on the scope and consequences of human trafficking and labour exploitation for private business, the role of Governments and the private sector in combating this phenomenon and the existing international instruments adopted to that end. Russia is an active participant in a related thematic programme sponsored by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) designed, inter alia, to improve and streamline national legislation on combating human trafficking and providing assistance to victims. We regularly provide resources for staff-training projects undertaken by the International Training Centre for Migration and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. Located in Minsk, it is the main organization of the countries of the CIS in this field.

The United Nations must play a central role in uniting the efforts of international and national entities established to combat human trafficking, and we acknowledge the consistent efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in this area. Of particular importance is the assistance that it provides to interested States for the purposes of combating existing problems.

While we believe that each country has the right to define the national mechanism that is optimal for it in the fight against human trafficking, we also support the development and capacity-building activities that the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and its member organizations provide in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. We are convinced that the Global Plan will remain an effective road map and a major guide for the international community as a whole as it strives to combat these criminal commercial activities. We hope that the discussion at this high-level meeting will facilitate progress in this area.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Hashmi (Pakistan): Pakistan welcomes this high-level meeting. We reiterate our strong support for and commitment to bringing an end to the heinous crime of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. We also welcome the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which was adopted yesterday (resolution 72/1).

Trafficking in persons continues to be one of the most serious offences. It violates the human rights of the individual and undermines peace and sustainable development. It is an egregious violation of the principles

of human dignity and integrity and threatens the rule of law. Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, is condemnable in all its forms, including sexual exploitation, debt bondage, organ removal and forced labour. The transnational nature of this complex crime calls for enhanced international cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination.

Given the present large-scale displacement of human beings occurring in several regions of the world, this issue has taken on greater relevance and importance than ever. It is therefore crucial that countries of origin, transit and destination do all they can to halt and reverse such trafficking. A pervasive sense of despondency and lack of prospects induced by protracted conflict and insecurity lies at the core of this phenomenon. To successfully combat trafficking in persons, Member States need to address the root causes and drivers of trafficking, such as poverty, inequality and protracted conflict. Sustainable solutions require the redoubling of efforts aimed at addressing the demand side of the equation.

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, together with the Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, has served as a centrepiece of the existing global framework to combat this challenge. The adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2010 was an important step in our collective fight against this form of organized crime.

The holistic approach, predicated on components of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership, continues to be a blueprint for concerted efforts at all levels. We need to forge a victim-centred approach and scale up efforts to identify and protect those in need of our assistance. International resolve and commitment is the sine qua non for removing the bottlenecks and obstacles in the proper implementation of the relevant laws and conventions. The provision of financial and technical support to developing countries can help them to streamline processes, improve data-collection and sharing mechanisms, and implement projects at the grass-roots level.

Pakistan has adopted a range of legislative and regulatory measures. We have drafted a national action plan for combating human trafficking, which is a comprehensive policy document on trafficking in persons. We are currently implementing our strategic framework document for the period 2016-2022. In addition, Pakistan is a party to various international instruments, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, and the 1957 Abolition of Forced Labour Convention.

There is evidence in some cases of a growing nexus between transnational organized criminal groups and terrorist groups, which is a cause for global concern. Conflict situations provide an ideal opportunity and propitious environment for such unholy alliances. To effectively tackle persistent challenges and emerging trends, we should continue to be guided by the imperative of an integrated and comprehensive approach buttressed by a long-term political and financial commitment. Coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders is needed to develop a synergistic policy framework for countering this threat.

In conclusion, I would like to convey Pakistan's appreciation for the ongoing work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, especially with respect to assisting Member States in countering the challenge of trafficking in persons and in providing technical assistance to countries and personal assistance to the victims of trafficking.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Guatemala.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala believes that it is only through dialogue and the exchange of information and best practices that we can articulate a comprehensive, coordinated and shared response by the States of origin, transit and destination of smuggled migrants or victims of human trafficking that will guarantee orderly, regular and secure migratory flows, ensure full respect for the human rights of migrants and place the person and his or her rights at the centre of all processes regardless of immigration status.

We believe that the theme of this session of the General Assembly, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", gives us a framework to deliberate on the dangers that irregular migration poses to migrants, who are at risk of falling victim to appalling, unlawful acts. Similarly, and keeping in mind that the crime of trafficking in persons is dynamic and multifaceted, it is important to emphasize that a forum for dialogue such as the General Assembly is the appropriate venue for promoting cooperation

and coordination among States, in particular by strengthening and implementing instruments created to improve the detection, protection, care and repatriation of victims and support the prevention, prosecution and punishment of this crime.

Guatemala has made progress in strengthening its institutional capacities both domestically and in terms of international legislation, while responding in a differentiated manner to the rights of all migratory groups without undermining the rights of the most vulnerable, such as children and young people, women, persons with disabilities, the elderly and indigenous peoples, among other victimized groups. We also bear in mind that, in addition to ensuring the well-being of migrants and their families, it is necessary to safeguard all of their rights. Against that backdrop, my country can highlight the following progress.

In terms of prevention, Guatemala was the first country in Central America to join the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's international campaign, having defined a unified strategy to fight the crime of trafficking in persons and complying with our international commitments on the subject in terms of domestic legislation, and placing the issue on our national agenda in order to generate consensus and oversee the launch of the appropriate initiatives. Moreover, as a part of our campaign to raise awareness and disseminate information, 26 radio broadcasts were made in Mayan languages on eight national stations, in addition to other awareness-raising campaigns launched to alert the population to this scourge.

In terms of detection, Guatemala has implemented the Alba-Keneth Early Alert System, which consists of a set of specific actions coordinated among public institutions that assist us locating and safeguarding minors who have been abducted or are missing, thereby reducing the risk of human trafficking, sexual slavery, forced labour and even of organ trafficking. Moreover, it is worth noting that in 2016 the Inter-Institutional Committee against Trafficking drafted the *Identification Guide for Victims of Trafficking in Persons and Victim Reference Form*, which promote early detection of potential victims of trafficking and are to be implemented by different State and civil-society institutions.

In terms of care and protection, just last year our agency against sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking in persons took measures to strengthen comprehensive care for victims, promoting the use and taking advantage of the specialized temporary shelter infrastructure and strengthening care programmes that include medical, psychological and social assistance as well as support for rebuilding lives, technical and vocational training and academic learning.

In terms of prosecution and punishment, in 2017 the State has sentenced 19 perpetrators to terms ranging from two to 28 years of imprisonment for cases involving human trafficking, with such aggravating factors as labour exploitation, begging, forced labour or subjection to bondage.

Finally, we acknowledge with thanks the successful facilitation of negotiations by the delegations of the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Belgium that led to the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1). We reaffirm our commitment and political will to take decisive measures to put an end to this scourge, which affects mainly children, young people and women.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Libya.

Mr. Elmajerbi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): This high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons is being held at a time when this phenomenon, a grave violation of human rights and dignity, is on the rise. It is evident that armed conflicts, unemployment, social exclusion, poverty and the devastation caused by natural disasters are key factors leading to the flight of refugees, migrants, the displaced and those who fall into the hands of merciless traffickers, whose exploitation of victims is without limit.

As we appraise the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, we should not only focus our attention on addressing this phenomenon and its repercussions but also examine the conditions contributing to the expansion and increase of trafficking networks and activities. In that regard, I would like to stress the following points.

First, the role of diplomacy needs to be enhanced in order to prevent armed conflicts, keep them from worsening and put an end to the external forces that have fuelled many conflicts and led to the displacement

and suffering of human beings. Such forces create environments conducive to the development of rapacious criminal networks.

Secondly, we must support the efforts of poor and developing countries aimed at fulfilling their obligations within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, including fighting poverty, hunger and unemployment and improving service-sector performance. That will encourage people not to leave their countries and fall victim to exploitation.

Thirdly, we must provide the assistance needed to build human and institutional capacities that will enable national authorities to fight trafficking networks, prosecute perpetrators and overcome impunity. Enhanced cooperation is required to eradicate these networks, whose interests are interconnected and transcend borders, thanks to modern telecommunication technologies.

Fourthly, international solidarity must be stepped up in order to provide fresh resources that respond to the need for shelters for refugees and migrants, particularly in countries unable to fulfil their obligations in this area. We must focus in particular on the situations of women and children in a manner that respects their rights and protects them from exploitation.

Fifthly, we must establish and implement programmes and activities that raise awareness of the risks of the phenomenon of trafficking in persons. We must invest resources in the fight against trafficking in persons and engage eminent personalities in our campaigns.

Sixthly, we must improve data collection, analysis, statistics and information exchange with respect to trafficking in persons, particularly in relation to natural disasters, since disasters contribute to increases in the numbers of migrants and refugees. Despite instability and a lack of resources at the national level, the Libyan coast guard has managed to rescue thousands of migrants trying to make their way to Europe. The relevant authorities have now identified the trafficking networks and are bringing them to justice.

We enjoy bilateral cooperation with brotherly and friendly countries in addressing this phenomenon. We look forward to cooperating with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in implementing a number of programmes and activities related to the fight against trafficking in persons.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): It is clear that trafficking in persons is a scourge that unites the membership of the United Nations. Since no country is immune from this awful crime, it is right that every country is united in the shared commitment we made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. Ensuring that the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons helps deliver on this commitment will require us to act across a number of fronts. I would like to highlight four of them.

First, we must bring greater political attention to the issue of human trafficking. The hidden nature of this crime makes it too easy to ignore. As world leaders and their representatives gathered in New York last week, the United Kingdom launched a call to action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. Its statement of political intent explicitly welcomed and aligned itself very closely with the Global Plan. Approximately 37 countries have endorsed the call, and I urge others to do the same.

Secondly, every country should develop and implement a national strategy to address each of the key elements of prosecution, protection, prevention and partnerships. The United Kingdom's approach is underpinned by its 2014 modern-slavery strategy. To shed light on the scale of the problem, every country could also consider producing a prevalence estimate and statistics on trafficking. In 2013, we estimated that there were up to 13,000 victims in the United Kingdom.

Thirdly, we must ensure that trafficking is stamped out of our economies. The International Labour Organization estimates that forced labour generates $150 billion in illegal profits each year. We must better regulate labour policies and work with business to eradicate trafficking from supply chains. The United Kingdom's Modern Slavery Act requires every business with global revenue of over $48 million to report on the actions it is taking in that regard. Governments must also address their own procurement practices.

Fourthly, our law-enforcement and criminal-justice systems need specialist capabilities. The latest report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime made it

clear that the number of global convictions remains too low. The United Kingdom introduced a comprehensive legal framework in 2015, and we are now seeing increasing numbers of convictions for the new offences it delineated.

Trafficking is a development issue. It is also a human rights issue and a security issue. It needs a coherent United Nations response, but, to date, we have not seen enough progress made in addressing the scale and urgency of the problem. We need United Nations agencies to cooperate effectively and not compete with each other over resources and turf. We urge the Secretary-General to resolve such persistent challenges because, whether we describe it as human trafficking, modern slavery or forced labour, we must stand together if the exploitation of human beings is to end. We have reviewed the Global Plan of Action, so let us now take action.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Permanent Secretary and Acting Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mr. Srivihok (Thailand): Since the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, in 2010, Thailand has made the eradication of human trafficking a priority on its national agenda. Strengthening the Global Plan of Action's "Four Ps" approach, the Thai Government has adopted a "4+1 P" framework that comprises prosecution, protection, prevention, partnership and policy. For Thailand, policy is in fact the trunk of the tree that holds the branches of the other four Ps together.

First, in terms of policy, an amendment to the Thai Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act clarifies our definition of exploitation to include practices similar to slavery, forced labour or services, seizure of identification documents and debt bondage, in line with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. That ensures that all victims of trafficking are protected under Thai law.

Secondly, with regard to prosecution, our zero-tolerance approach to human trafficking, especially traffickers, was evident again recently in the verdict reached against 62 offenders in the Rohingya matter, where sentences of up to 94 years for Government officials were handed down.

Thirdly, with respect to protection, Thailand attaches importance to effective victim-protection measures for all groups, especially vulnerable ones. We adhere to a human rights-based approach in the interests of victims and provide for child- and gender-sensitive protection.

Fourthly, with regard to prevention, we are working on establishing a national screening mechanism for undocumented immigrants, victims of trafficking and refugees. Once in place, it will effectively screen out those who do not need assistance, while screening in those who truly do need protection. Thailand has also signed a labour-cooperation memorandum of understanding with neighbouring countries to facilitate approximately 403,000 migrant workers from four different countries be able to work legally in Thailand. We have also cooperated with the International Labour Organization to promote and implement good-labour-practices programmes in the fisheries and poultry sectors. Furthermore, a draft national action plan on business and human rights, which is in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, is also being developed.

Finally, with regard to partnership, the Government has strengthened public-private civil-society partnerships in various ways. Among many initiatives, a memorandum on cooperation in preventing and suppressing trafficking in persons was signed last year by more than 50 Government agencies and private-sector and civil-society organizations. Thailand believes that more can be done. We have to step up our efforts to make sure that trafficking is a high-risk/no-reward business. We must also cultivate public empathy for the victims and give due consideration to the special needs of all vulnerable groups.

An improved data-collection and analysis system is another factor that is essential for providing the right solutions in terms of prevention, protection, prosecution and remedies. In that regard, partner countries, the United Nations and its relevant agencies are in a position to contribute, as they have the resources to help all States Members of the United Nations improve their data sets and analysis at the aggregated and disaggregated levels.

As we move forward with the Global Plan following the adoption of the political declaration, we must strengthen cooperation with all stakeholders, including the private sector. Their roles and contributions are

invaluable and must be integrated into our efforts at all levels. The Bali Process Government and Business Forum, launched in Perth, Australia, last month, is a promising initiative that should be fostered and developed alongside domestic efforts in the same vein.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Argentina.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Due to the allocated time limitations, this is a summarized version of the Argentine Republic's statement, which is available in its entirety via PaperSmart.

Argentina believes that the fight against trafficking in persons and forced labour should be holistic. It should include multiple actors working at different levels and take place within the framework of the defence and promotion of human rights. This perspective is reflected in Argentina's policies on combating the crime of trafficking and on providing assistance to victims, with the understanding that preventing this crime is impossible without guaranteeing an inclusive society. The Government of President Macri has placed special emphasis on promoting a gender perspective, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5, from a multisectoral, cross-cutting and federal approach. Gender equality is one of the fundamental objectives of our Government, and the overall empowerment of women will contribute to the prevention of trafficking.

For Argentina, the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons is a fundamental tool for the implementation of public policies. That is why we welcomed the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action (resolution 72/1) at the beginning of this high-level meeting (see A/72/PV.24).

Argentina remains committed to combating human trafficking, which is the most extreme form of violence, by engaging at the multilateral level and promoting national policies designed to eliminate the crime in the country. From a human rights perspective, Argentina protects the privacy and identity of victims of human trafficking and seeks to take measures to ensure their physical, psychological and social recovery. Argentina works to provide victims with adequate housing, counselling and information in various languages, as well as medical, psychological and material assistance. It also endeavours to provide victims — be they foreign or domestic — with employment and educational opportunities as well as adequate and accessible training.

The State is striving to encourage the reintegration of victims of trafficking and labour exploitation into society, promote dignified work and, working in tandem with the private sector, establish joint mechanisms so as to avoid the recurrence of such crimes. The objective is to avoid violating victims' rights and their revictimization at all stages of the process. Argentina ensures that foreign victims are given the option of remaining in the country, filing for refugee status or returning to their country of origin. In addition, under Argentine anti-trafficking law, victims will not be punished.

We would also like to mention Argentina's work in the context of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), which has approached the matter by adopting a regional guide on the early detection of transborder human trafficking and by sponsoring a campaign entitled "MERCOSUR free of trafficking", which is aimed at raising awareness of the crime.

The Argentine Republic considers trafficking in persons to be a complex and very serious form of exploitation. We hope we can continue to work together with the rest of the international community in order to end an abuse that violates human rights and for which there must always be zero tolerance.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of delegation of the Republic of Colombia.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the renewed support for the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the fight against this terrible scourge, which affects almost all of us, in particular women and girls, as was illustrated by the heart-wrenching testimony that we heard yesterday (see A/72/PV.24). We welcome the political declaration on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action (resolution 72/1), which, together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and across the three unambiguous pillars set forth in Sustainable Development Goals and targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2, reaffirms our political commitment and provides us with a road map that my Government has embraced with a view to preventing and combating trafficking in persons and protecting and assisting its victims.

Colombia considers trafficking in persons to be an offshoot of transnational organized crime whereby

numerous countries are transformed at one and the same time into points of origin, transit and destination of victims, thereby making the prevention, investigation and prosecution of trafficking activities conducted by criminal organizations and their links all the more difficult. Trafficking in persons is an international phenomenon with global consequences, which leads to serious human rights violations.

Unfortunately, my country is not exempt from this phenomenon. Every year, the national Government identifies and assists many victims of the crime in its very various forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour and begging on behalf of others. In the struggle against the phenomenon and in accordance with the provisions of the Global Plan of Action, Colombia is undertaking activities in three fundamental areas that I would like to mention.

First, in terms of prevention, we have made progress in educating children and adolescents on how to exercise their human, sexual and reproductive rights so that they can make responsible, informed and autonomous decisions concerning their bodies and their own sexuality. Through this approach, we are dealing a forceful blow to human trafficking.

Secondly, with regard to the investigation and prosecution component, my country is strengthening its judicial branch through specialized training in the crime of human trafficking, while seeking to ensure that the competent authorities have a clear understanding of the phenomenon.

Thirdly, assisting victims is one of our main objectives. We are striving to strengthen the processes whereby assistance is delivered to children and adolescents who are directly or indirectly victimized by the crime.

Those actions confirm the national Government of Colombia's commitment and resolve in combating human trafficking, as well as the progress it has made. The complex reality of the issue, however, requires the involvement of the international community as a whole, which is why we are also working closely with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Organization for Migration. Indeed, eradicating the human-trafficking phenomenon once and for all requires our joint efforts and determined action.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya.

Ms. Mwangi (Kenya): We thank the President for convening this high-level meeting to review the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and our collective efforts to combat human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a global phenomenon that affects almost every country in the world, be it a country of origin, transit or destination for its victims. Persons from sub-Saharan Africa and from countries in conflict are especially vulnerable to being trafficked as a result of the so-called push factors for human trafficking, which include conflicts, poverty, the lack of economic opportunities, unemployment and low rates of education, as well as inequalities between and among countries. We may also need to consider whether there is a causal link between racism, bigotry, prejudice and human trafficking so as to craft effective legal and policy responses and address the unique vulnerabilities of victims.

Kenya is a signatory of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, to which it acceded in 2005. The Protocol was incorporated into Kenya's domestic legislation in 2010 through the promulgation of the Counter-trafficking in Persons Act. In order to implement that legislation, an advisory committee was established to advise the Government on inter-agency activities aimed at combating trafficking in persons. The Committee was also given the mandate to enhance the implementation of preventive, protective and rehabilitative programmes for trafficked persons, among its other functions. The committee is also training key actors in the justice sector, including the police, judicial officers, investigators and prosecutors, on effective ways to combat trafficking using a multisectoral approach.

Kenya also adopted the Victims Protection Act with a view to protecting vulnerable victims, such as those who have been rescued from traffickers. The Act offers protection to any person in Kenya identified as a victim of trafficking and establishes a victims assistance fund. We have also developed a national plan of action to combat human trafficking and promote cooperation among various stakeholders from all sectors. The plan of action lays the groundwork for closer regional and international cooperation and offers a coherent road map for addressing the problems of human trafficking in Kenya.

In 2016, the Government developed the guidelines for a national referral mechanism to assist victims of human trafficking. The mechanism is in essence a system geared towards identification, referrals, holistic support and assistance for the victims of trafficking.

For the fiscal year 2017-2018, the counter-trafficking in persons secretariat received $600,000 and an additional $200,000 in order to fund the establishment of a shelter for victims. The Government has organized public-awareness campaigns on trafficking in persons, such as the one Kenya sponsored on 30 July 2017, World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

In 2014, the Government revoked the licenses of more than 900 agencies that had been recruiting workers for jobs in the Middle East and the Gulf region. It continues to vet recruitment agencies by requiring them to reapply for accreditation on an annual basis. We have also signed bilateral agreements with several countries to help ease the resettlement of Kenyan migrant workers and to address cases of abuse when they are reported. We believe that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its Sustainable Development Goals on trafficking in persons, provides the foundation for the actions that need to be taken to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling.

The Government has also initiated various empowerment strategies with a view to improving the livelihoods of Kenyans by setting up a number of funds for the benefit of women, young people, orphans and persons with disabilities. It has also supported projects designed to address unemployment. Kenya calls for enhanced international cooperation, including in terms of capacity-building and technical assistance, in order to prevent and combat trafficking in persons.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.